

a component placement system for taking components from the component storage area and placing the components on the printed circuit boards;
an enclosure surrounding the component storage area; and
a dry gas delivery system for delivery of a dry gas to the storage area to maintain a dry atmosphere and to prevent moisture from being absorbed by the components.

6. (Amended) A component placement machine for placing components on printed circuit boards, the machine comprising:
a component storage area;
a component placement system for taking components from the component storage area and placing the components on the printed circuit boards;
an enclosure surrounding the component storage area; and
a dry gas delivery system for delivery of a dry gas to the storage area to maintain a dry atmosphere and to prevent moisture from being absorbed by the components, wherein a flow rate of the dry gas delivered to the storage area is controlled by a control system including a humidity sensor within the component storage area.

7. (Amended) A component placement machine for placing components on printed circuit boards, the machine comprising:
a component storage area;
a component placement system for taking components from the component storage area and placing the components on the printed circuit boards;
an enclosure surrounding the component storage area; and
a dry gas delivery system for delivery of a dry gas to the storage area to maintain a dry atmosphere and to prevent moisture from being absorbed by the components, wherein the dry gas is delivered to the component storage area at a first flow

rate when the storage area is open and is delivered at a second flow rate when the storage area is closed.

9. (Amended) A method of mounting electronic components on a printed circuit board, the method comprising:

storing electronic components in a dry atmosphere in a storage area of a surface mount device placement machine;

maintaining the dry atmosphere in the storage area by enclosing the storage area and injecting dry gas into the storage area;

removing the components from the storage area; and

mounting the components on a printed circuit board.

Please add new Claims 19-30 as follows:

19. (New) The machine of Claim 1, wherein the components to be placed on the printed circuit boards are stored in the dry atmosphere within the machine and are not exposed to moisture during this storage time.

20. (New) The machine of Claim 1, further comprising a heater for heating the dry gas.

21. (New) The machine of Claim 1, further comprising a flow meter for regulating the flow of the dry gas to the storage area.

22. (New) The machine of Claim 1, further comprising a multiplicity of inlets to provide a consistent dry atmosphere around all of the components in the storage area.

23. (New) The machine of Claim 22, wherein the multiplicity of inlets includes a sprayer or a diffuser.

24. (New) The machine of Claim 1, wherein the components to be placed on the printed circuit boards maintain a dry atmosphere without heating.

25. (New) The machine of Claim 6, wherein the components to be placed on the printed circuit boards maintain a dry atmosphere without heating.

26. (New) The machine of Claim 7, further comprising a controller for automatically regulating the first flow rate and the second flow rate.

27. (New) The machine of Claim 7, further comprising intermittently turning on and off the flow rate when the relative humidity set point is reached.

28. (New) The machine of Claim 7, further comprising adjusting the flow rate to maintain a preset relative humidity point when the relative humidity set point is reached.

29. (New) The machine of Claim 7, wherein the components to be placed on the printed circuit boards maintain a dry atmosphere without heating.

30. (New) The method of Claim 9, wherein the step of maintaining the dry atmosphere is performed without heating the components.